

TIMARU DISTRICT COUNCIL
HISTORIC HERITAGE ITEM RECORD FORM

HERITAGE ITEM NAME former Timaru Drill Hall

ADDRESS 2 High Street, Timaru

PHOTOGRAPH



(Dr J Wilson, September 2018)

DISTRICT PLAN ITEM NO. New **HNZ LIST NO. & CATEGORY** n / a
(at time of assessment)

LEGAL DESCRIPTION Section 475 Town of Timaru

VALUATION NUMBER 2501101900

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION 1886

**ARCHITECT/DESIGNER/
BUILDER** RA Lawson, architect; W Hall-Jones, contractor

STYLE Military vernacular

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Bow-arched hall with lean-to section on west side; rectangular footprint. Tapering concrete buttresses along side walls, windows set into west-facing 'gable' end. Multi-pane windows in lean-to. Windows beneath eaves on north wall.

MATERIALS/STRUCTURE

Timber, brick, concrete, corrugated metal.

ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS

Lean-to addition to west end (Meason & Marchant, architects; 1896-7). West wall reclad in concrete blocks, west 'gable end' windows installed (date unknown).

SETTING

The former drill hall stands on the east side of High Street and is bounded to the north by Mill Street. The former Timaru Milling Company office (1941-42) is on the opposite side of Mill Street and further to the east is the former Bruce's 'Royal Flouring Mills' (1881-82, heritage item # 39). The extent of scheduling is the land parcel on which the hall stands, partly in view of the potential archaeological values of the site.

HISTORY

Local units of New Zealand's Volunteer Force were established around the country in the 1860s. The Timaru Rifle Volunteers, for example, numbered 62 members by September 1866. Falling numbers led to the company's merger with the Timaru Artillery Corps in the winter of 1868. Drill was conducted in various venues until a drill hall was built by the Timaru Garrison Corps at the corner of High and Grey (Mill) Streets in 1886. The hall was officially opened on 1 September of that year and it then became the base of operations for the Port Guards, Timaru Rifles and the City Rifles. In addition to a drill hall the building accommodated club rooms for each corps. The drill hall was the venue of a celebration to mark the South Canterbury Jubilee (1859-1909), which was attended by Premier Sir Joseph Ward. It was also hired for use as an ice-skating rink in the early 20th century. In early 1913 the hall and its site were handed over to the Defence Department, the Defence Act of 1910 having created a territorial force from the earlier volunteer units and introduced compulsory military service. The South Canterbury Military District was headquartered at Timaru. In August 1914 soldiers marched from the drill shed to the railway station where they shipped out to training camps before going overseas soon after the outbreak of World War I. After the Public Works Department undertook renovations of the Olympia Hall in Barnard Street on behalf of the Defence Department in 1944, the High Street hall was sold. It was later occupied by JK Mooney & Son, wool buyers, and it remains in light industrial use today.

HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

The former Timaru Drill Hall has historical and social significance for its association, for almost 60 years, with local military groups and activities, including the recruitment and training of men who served in the South African War, World War I and World War II. The hall's social significance also arises from its use for civic events and carnivals.

CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The former Timaru Drill Hall has cultural significance as a demonstration of the way of life of members of Timaru's volunteers and as a place from which some local men were farewelled before undertaking war service overseas.

ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE

The former Timaru Drill Hall has architectural significance as the work of preeminent Dunedin architect RA Lawson. Robert Lawson (1833-1902) was the son of a Scottish carpenter; he trained as an architect in Perth (Scotland) and Edinburgh and then immigrated to Australia in 1854. Lawson won the competition to design First Church in Dunedin and settled there in mid-1862. He designed over 40 churches and was an active member of the Presbyterian church. Larnach Castle (1871-76) is arguably Lawson's most famous design; in Timaru he also designed the Post Office (1879-80), the Bank of New Zealand (1870) and Trinity Presbyterian Church (1875-76), both of which are no longer extant. Lawson left New Zealand in 1890 and practised in Melbourne until 1900. He died at Sutherlands near Pleasant Point in December 1902.

TECHNOLOGICAL AND CRAFTSMANSHIP SIGNIFICANCE

The former Timaru Drill Hall has technological value for its timber and iron construction, especially in regard to the former hall in which the structure allowed for a large open space without the need for intermediary supports. The contractor, William Hall-Jones (1851-1936), later became Prime Minister of New Zealand.

CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The former Timaru Drill Hall has contextual significance for the contribution it makes to the character of High Street and for its historic association with the Timaru Trooper's Memorial (1904, heritage item # 18), which was located near the drill hall on the west side of High Street until 1926.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE

As the building pre-dates 1900, its site has potential archaeological values relating to the colonial development and use of the property.

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

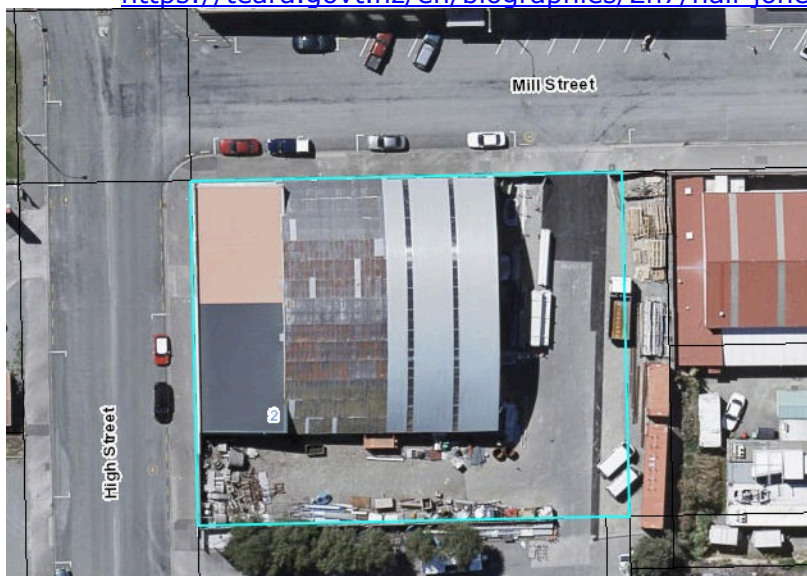
The former Timaru Drill Hall has overall heritage significance to Timaru and to Timaru District as a whole. The building has historical and social significance for its association with Timaru's military history and as a venue for civic events and cultural significance as a demonstration of the way of life of Timaru's volunteers between 1886 and 1944. The former Timaru Drill Hall has architectural significance as the work of leading Dunedin architect RA Lawson and technological value for its timber and iron construction. The former Timaru Drill Hall has contextual significance for its streetscape contribution and relationship to Timaru Troopers' Memorial; as the building pre-dates 1900, its site has potential archaeological values.

HERITAGE CATEGORY

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REFERENCES

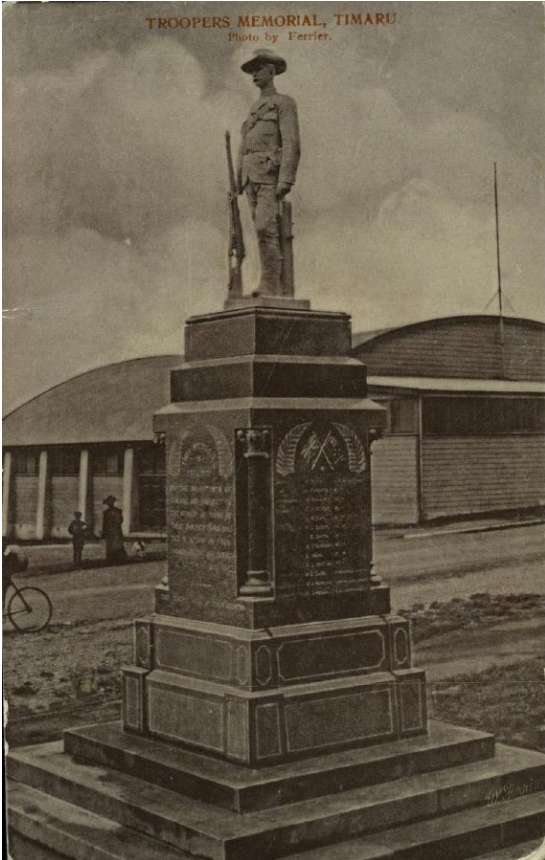
- *Timaru Herald* 22 September 1866, p. 2; 13 November 1867, p. 2; 26 February 1868, p. 3; 1 July 1868, p. 7; 4 July 1868, p. 3; 19 August 1868, p. 3; 16 December 1872, p. 2; 14 May 1873, p. 1; 13 March 1886, p. 1; 16 March 1886, p. 1; 10 May 1886, p. 2; 1 September 1886, p. 3. 25 September 1886, p. 2; 14 April 1891, p. 3; 23 September 1896, p. 2; 10 October 1896, p. 1; 14 January 1897, p. 3; 21 March 1913, p. 8; 16 May 1949 (undated); 6 May 2008, p. 9; 23 August 2014, p. 11.
- *South Canterbury Times* 16 March 1886, p. 3.
- *Otago Daily Times* 22 September 2013 (available online).
- Archives New Zealand; see research file for relevant holdings.
- JB Crawford 'The Role and Structure of the New Zealand Volunteer Force 1885-1910' Master of Arts thesis, University of Canterbury, 1986 (available online).
- <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/215/lawson-robert-arthur>
- <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2h7/hall-jones-william>



Extent of scheduling, 2 High Street, Timaru.



North elevation. Dr A McEwan, 11 July 2018.



c.1905 postcard showing newly installed Troopers' Memorial with the drill hall in the background. South Canterbury Museum.